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ABSTRACT

Many parents of children at risk for failure do not participate in school-related activities. Some parents have a negative view of all school contacts. This practicum examined ways to engage parents of children at risk of failure in informative and self-help experiences that helped the parents feel more connected with the school experience. Eight monthly newsletters and eight parent group forums were used to reduce parents' frustration and increase their participation. The newsletters provided information to parents and also provided an opportunity for parents to share topics of interest to them. The group meetings gave parents the opportunity to identify and discuss issues. Among the objectives were that parents would: (1) report a better understanding of child development issues; (2) increase their positive input into their children's academic lives; and (3) increase their participation in school-related activities and parent teacher conferences. All objectives were met. The parent questionnaire, parent group appraisal form, and other forms are appended. Contains a list of 44 references. (SM)

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Improving Parent Participation by Reducing the Barriers That Inhibit Their Forming a Partnership with the School

by

Brenda Seldon-Amos

Cluster 36

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A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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Approved:

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Date of Final Approval of Report

June S. Delano
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ABSTRACT

Improving Parent Participation by Reducing the Barriers That Inhibit Their Forming a Partnership with the School. Seldon-Amos, Brenda, 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Parenting/Parent Involvement/Parents Participation/Parents of At-Risk Children.

This practicum was designed to increase the participation of parents of at-risk children in school-related activities. The practicum focused on addressing some of the major causes, as gleaned from the literature, for the lack of parental involvement.

The primary goal was for parents of at-risk children to become less frustrated in understanding and guiding their children. A secondary goal was to give the parents a sense of ownership in forming a partnership with the school. In order to accomplish this partnership, research was followed that suggests that parents are able, and should, be involved in the school programs that are established for their benefit.

The practicum had two components. The first component included eight monthly newsletters. By submitting ideas to be discussed in the newsletter, the parents directed much of its content. This gave the parents a sense of ownership and an interest in participating in the second component, the workshops. These workshops included the topics of the articles that the parents had suggested for the newsletters. This enhanced self-esteem, encouraged leadership, and promoted confidence in the groups.

The outcomes of this practicum were positive for parents of at-risk children, teachers, administrators, and children. Objectives were achieved in increased parent participation in school-related activities, discussion of school-related issues between parents and their children, discussion of child-related issues among parents in a workshop setting, and parent verification of a better understanding of child development issues.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

This practicum's work setting is one of four school districts in a northern county of a mid-Atlantic state. The state has been under a court ordered school busing plan since 1981.

The setting is the largest of the county's school districts. It has a population that exceeds 17,000 children, and is geographically located in the most urban portion of the state.

The county's four districts are divided into a shape that resembles a pie. At the core of the pie is the largest city in the county. The outlining neighborhoods in the extending "slice" of the pie include the areas surrounding the state's university. This particular area contains the suburban communities of the district.

The educational sites consist of three junior and three senior high schools, five intermediate schools, eleven primary schools, and one kindergarten center. This center is for the city's five-year-olds. The county's five-year-olds attend kindergarten in the primary schools near their homes. While all primary junior and senior high schools are located in the county, all intermediate schools are located in the city. In 1990, the district mainstreamed its students attending the alternative special educational school to each student's neighborhood school.

The district is comprised of communities with a diverse socioeconomic population. The total population is about 50,000 residents. The areas in the outlying "slice" of the pie are still being developed. Land that was once

farmland is giving way to housing for a growing number of affluent residents.

In this district, the inner city is the core of the pie. Most of the residents either have moderate to low paying jobs, or depend on state and local public assistance for survival. There are equivalent areas to this inner city area in the outlining county. Besides having low income, these residents have an additional handicap. They are virtually isolated from public health, safety, social and transportation services.

The middle income groups consist of residents employed in various businesses, different schools, the university, and other professions. There is a small population of upper middle class residents. They hold high level positions at the university, in major industrial companies, and in a rapidly expanding high level banking arena.

The majority of the district's children are from the middle class socioeconomic sector. They are from employed families with at least a high school education. However, approximately 5,000 of the 17,000 students are eligible for subsidized breakfast and lunch. These children are from the county as well as from the inner city.

The governing body of the school district is a nine-member school board. The members serving on the board represent the combined communities in the district. The district's superintendent is the secretary of the board. In the event of a tie, the superintendent casts the deciding vote.

The administrative offices, in addition to the superintendent, include three assistant superintendents, twelve directors, and seven supervisors. There are 4,000 personnel employed in the district.

Due to the steadily increasing number of new developments, this district is not only the largest in the county, it is also the largest in the state. The

annual operating budget for the district is approximately $5,000,000. For the past six years, the district has been facing several budgeting problems.

Construction of school buildings to accommodate the growing number of new students is draining the budget for operational and maintenance expenditures. Five years ago, a district new construction referendum was brought before the voting residents. The referendum passed. Due to unforeseen problems with the construction plans and other financial constraints, the district is suffering from a lack of revenue. Many budgetary items, such as added support staff, salary increases, continuation of programs, building maintenance and repairs, depend on local funding.

During the past four school years, it was necessary for the district to make adjustments that affect the teachers' contracts. Although a settlement was made, an agreement was very difficult to reach, and several areas suffered drastic cuts. The three areas most affected in the contract settlement were support staff, building maintenance and repairs, and salary increases. Salaries in this district are now the lowest of the four districts.

The area of adjustments in support staff includes a reduction in the number of district aids, reading specialist, and teacher of the academically gifted. Computer teachers will only be staffed in junior and senior high schools. Previously, computer teachers were also in the intermediate schools. The counseling staff suffered cuts on the junior and senior high levels. There have been no adjustments made in the elementary staff. There is no primary counselor in the district. However, each intermediate school has one counselor.

The district is interested in meeting the needs of its 17,000 students. Committees on the district and building levels frequently meet. The topics of

discussion include discipline, achievement tests scores, the lack of enough science materials, and other curriculum-based matters.

The area of this practicum focused on the parents of the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders attending school in the writer's work setting. The concentration is specifically directed towards those parents of at-risk children living in the inner city.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is the only counselor in the largest intermediate school in the district. This school, located in the inner city, has a school population of 1,238 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. Three hundred twenty-eight of the children are loca. The remaining 910 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders are bused from the district's outlying areas.

The counselor's training and background include a Master's Degree in elementary counseling with a certification in secondary counseling and administration. There is a total of fifteen years in education with five of these years as a classroom teacher, and ten of these years counseling intermediate age children. Experiences also include presenting at workshops where the writer presents an original award winning counseling program, participation in local television talk shows, and private individual and family counseling.

At the end of the 1991 open house, the traditional lack of attendance from parents within walking distance of the school was discussed by the principal, two vice-principals, and counselor. Because open house was considered by the administration to be a time to positively interact with the school, this lack of attendance was especially distressing.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The basic purpose of schooling is to support the young so that they will matriculate through the system and emerge as vocationally mature and well adjusted citizens of America. However, many children and their parents are not even in tune with this concept of schooling. Therefore, a far greater number of children are being termed at-risk for failure in the work setting than can be adequately supported.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), there cannot be effective schooling without the support of the parents. This problem of enlisting the partnership of parents was a challenging one for the school in the writer's work setting. This is not to say there had not been effective parental support. The P.T.A. had always been strong, and parents volunteer for many projects during and after the school day. "The squeaky hinge gets the most oil" is a metaphor that truly fits the school's situation as far as parent influence was concerned. Approximately 20% of the mothers were suburban mothers who either worked part time or did not work at all. They were the parents who had the time and the positive energy to become involved. Therefore, they could indulge the school to support their children's personal needs. This was reflected in programming which impacted from the district level to the extra support for these children in their particular classrooms.

Next there were the working parents who were able to lend some support to the school and to adequately support their particular children. They were "the aware and involved parents." These parents attended school related functions that pertain to school programming and policies in general.

They were also visible in the support of their children. This included about 15% of the minority parents and 50% of the white parents.

Problem Documentation

Parents of at-risk children did not participate in school-related activities, and thus were not able to help and support their children. Therefore, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), their children could not "begin" to receive effective schooling. The writer had been a counselor in this setting for the last ten years, and had witnessed a steady climb in the numbers of these parents. The concern for the need to help parents of at-risk children was reflected in the increased number of requests for parents to attend parent conferences with teachers. Not only were there, now, too many conferences scheduled for the writer to be able to attend, but the increase in the "no shows" was obvious. Of the estimated 30% of at-risk children in the school population, about 90% of the parents received appointments for parent teacher conferences. Among this number, the increase in the number of "no shows" was obvious.

Causative Analysis

The parents included in the group of concern appeared to project a feeling of ambivalence about the influence that they exerted on their children's school success. In fact, some educators in the work setting wondered if these parents cared about their children being successful in school. Some remarked, "I remember his mother was just the same when she went to school."

Questions arose as to the cause of this dilemma. Four questions came to mind:

1. Why did these parents appear to be ambivalent about their children's education?
2. Was the problem a question of a lack of interest on the parents' part?
3. Did these parents have unmet needs? If so, how could we meet those needs?
4. How could we obtain their input in meeting those needs?

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Many parents today are indifferent to their children's schooling. They want their children to have happy, successful lives. However, these parents cannot connect with the process of schooling. The greatest challenge of the nineties is to positively affect change in the pattern of parental support for children. Only then can these parents become a viable influence in their children's social development. In order for them to exert this positive parental support, it must be assumed that these parents must learn how to overcome the same debilitating effects of their environment and fear of failure that are reflected in their intermediate school-aged children. These debilitating effects and fears were discussed in the literature review.

Powell (1991) examined policy issues currently facing the schools. In an attempt to understand the relationship between schools and families, the question concerning how schools can support families was explored. Powell (1991) felt that the question goes beyond asking how can the school promote parent involvement in their children's learning. He also emphasized the attention paid to the notion of the school as a family support system.

The reframing of the school and family connection impacted on how government employers and mainline institutions support families. These areas were considered by Powell (1991):

1. Prevailing images of family resourcefulness and characteristics.
2. Implications for expanding the school role in providing family support services.
3. The technical expertise of schools in providing these services approaches to supporting families.
4. Trade-offs involved in providing family-oriented programs to all families versus providing similar services for targeted populations.
5. Family services by schools as core elements or as peripheral.

The results of Powell's inquiry (1991) stated that schools were limited in their ability to provide a range of support services to families, and that extended support should more likely involve improving children's academic performances.

Assessing parental functioning was considered important (Barnett, Hall, & Bramlett, 1990) because family functioning establishes links across a wide range of maladaptive behaviors and psychopathological syndromes. Barnett, et al., (1990) examined the relationship between two measures in assessing family functioning. They were the Parent Stress Index (PSI) and the Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale (F-COPES).

Two other needs also underscored the importance in this assessment. One was assessing parental stress and coping. The other was the psychological well being of the parent. The factors were key with the respect to parent's providing mediating learning experiences to children as they passed through developmental learning stages. The study indicated that stress and coping were independent constructs, and both constructs must be measured adequately. The competence and planning ability of the care giver must be considered, as must be other variables related to coping. The study suggested

that further research that "compares the decision outcomes associated with screening alternatives is needed" (p. 18).

Pasley and Gecas (1984) considered the parental role one of the most difficult roles in our society today. Because of a lack of role definition and clarity, the role is further complicated by the nature of parenthood changes as children grow up and change. Then what was appropriate for one age no longer is appropriate for another age.

Pasley and Gecas felt that parents of adolescents were more highly susceptible to emotional and psychological stress. Consequently, this stress can have negative influences on marriages. However, more programs were directed to works improving the quality of life for children of younger ages. The authors studied parental perceptions of their roles with regard to perceived satisfaction and difficulties during the various phases of the family life cycle. The sample was of 208 families in 1981.

Parental attitude according to Rangaswami (1989) was recognized as an important factor in the development of children. The attitudes measured on a scale were over-protection, permissiveness, indulgence, rejection, acceptance, domination, hostility, attitude towards education, and attitude towards home management.

Most of the children who were successful as they grew up came from homes that were favorable and warm. Those children become constructive, interdependent, and also independent. According to Rangaswami (1989), children of parents with unfavorable attitudes, and were deprived of affection and care, developed various kinds of problems. These problems extended through the family and to relationships outside of the family.

Lewis (1990) felt that subsequent desegregation of schools made feelings of adequacy difficult for minority children, and the possibility of expected achievement difficult for more minority teachers.

In order to be helpful in the therapeutic enterprise, Solas (1991) asserted that the therapist (school) must gain some sense of what is being seen through the client's (parent's) eyes. The school must first come to understand the parent. Solas (1991) felt that you (parent) have to take quite a bit of the initiative in educating me (school). A grid is provided that allows individuals or groups to assess individual or shared family constructs.

Hardwick (1991) reported that over the years the professional network helping disturbed families has grown. The extended family support tended to be fading as the support network by professionals grew huge. Families may be confused as to who they should approach for a particular problem. Likewise, agencies may share in this confusion. This confusion may retard a family's growth and make the family even more incompetent. Included in these enabling factors was an invasion of privacy, over protection, and scapegoating. Hardwick's (1991) perspective explored the need for recognizing and dealing with these networking problems.

Adolescent mothers are at risk for negative parenting (McKenry, Kotch & Browne, 1991). They, therefore, assessed the dysfunctional attitudes of adolescent mothers by analyzing 157 participants involved in an on-going longitudinal study. Two sets of multiple regression analyses were performed. One regression was used to assess predictors of generally dysfunctional parenting attitudes, and another regression was used to predict risk for child abuse or neglect. The results showed that personal psychological resources of the parent were more effective in buffering the parent-child relationship

from stress than were the contextual sources of stress and support (p. 227). These appears to be more important than the characteristics of the child.

Many dysfunctional families are headed by female African-American women. Boyd-Franklin (1991) discussed the rationale for group treatment for this particular population. There were many issues that were unique to these women. One such issue according to Boyd-Franklin (1991) was separation/ individualization. This was a complicated issue because many African-American women are raised in an extended family culture. In this type of culture there is an expectation of kinship support. This issue becomes problematic when the dilemma of how to balance the need for individuals with the cultural or family pull towards group unity was considered.

For many of these families, the women are the center of the family. Often these women had also functioned as parental children in their own families and were overwhelmed (Boyd-Franklin, 1991). This caused depression and an emotional detachment from their own families. They were seeking to fulfill their own needs. The therapy attempted to help members "find a balance between setting limits on the demands of their families while staying connected to them and still developing themselves and their own needs" (p. 35). The women were often sensitive and feared having their families labeled "dysfunctional" (Boyd-Franklin, 1991).

The influence of prior information was an intriguing article by Lang, DeBeurs, Hanewald, and Leendert (1991). It investigated family therapy as it related to prior information. This prior information of the therapist may have distorted the therapist's perception of observable behavior and influenced the therapist's behavior in a negative way. If negative information conforms to stereotypes that were popular, this could be very devastating to the family. After receiving negative information, the therapist could have become very

biased. It should be noted the study suggested that the therapist be cautious not to become confused by prior negative information, and thus "slide" the client into some self-fulfilling prophesies.

Henggeler, Cohen, and James (1991) investigated the viewing of television as it relates to achievement in 25 children and their parents. The goal was to evaluate the association between large amounts of viewing time within family context. The family context evaluated related to mothers' perceptions of family stress, mothers' symptomatologies, and fathers' marital satisfaction. Two of the three associations were independent of social class. Since the results indicate that high rates of television viewing are linked to family contexts, the notion that television viewing is a manipulable variable was not as clear as it was hoped to be.

In comparison to mothers, fathers have been generally neglected in research concerning the father's influence on children (Coplin & Houts, 1991). Although it was found that in oppositional children a father's appearance in the home seemed to make a significant contribution in the prediction of outcome, the quality of the marital relationship must be considered.

Thirteen studies were reviewed by Coplin and Houts (1991) that included further involvement. Half of the parents in each group were exposed to additional therapy involving partner support training. This support training focused on increasing supportive relationships and problem-solving skills between the spouses. Results indicated significant reductions observed in a child's misbehavior as well as maternal reports of a child's problems for all in the training groups. Except for those in marital discord, marital adversiveness decreased.

O'Brien (1991) viewed the decline in the influence of grandparents as an intergenerational dilemma. She said that grandparents provided guidance, direction, advice, and nurturing to parents, children, and grandchildren. The author viewed four factors as significant in the dilemma. They were divorce, death, separation by design, and distance.

O'Brien (1991) felt that there are many benefits to a close contact, and would include foster grandparents in this role. Grandparents have treasures to share and they give love and acceptance. They also offer feelings of caring support, knowledge, perspective as a change agent, and a sense of hope for the future.

Child non-compliance was addressed by Wruble, Sheeber, Sorensen, Boggs, and Eyberg (1991). They said that this complaint was a frequent one of parents presenting their children for psychological treatment. They defined compliance as "the child performing one or more requested responses within a predefined period of time after a command was issued" (p. 58). Wruble, et al. (1991) conducted this research to assess the compliance times as well as the influence of the type of command. The likelihood of the child to comply was found to be influenced by command type.

There must become an emerging alliance between the parents of these intermediate children and the school (Berger, 1991). In order to have an educated populace, this home and school collaboration is essential (Berger, 1991). Since schools in America operate within a traditional middle-class framework, children from low-income and minority homes especially need a smooth transition from home to school, a strong home-school connection (Olmsted, 1991). It is hoped that educators can design "new" parent involvement programs (Olmsted, 1991).

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATIVE INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The general goal of this practicum was for parents of at-risk children to become less frustrated in understanding and guiding their children. Without parental support the children's schooling will go lacking (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, it was necessary to find ways to encourage parental support, and reduce parental frustration.

It was expected that parents would feel more comfortable in visibly supporting their children when they were exposed to materials on childhood development and strategies for support. According to the compiled records of teachers, 37 of the 177 parents of at-risk children asked to attend parent conferences during the first quarter kept their appointments. It was expected after the intervention that more parents of at-risk children would be willing to positively communicate with the school in the support of their children. It was also expected that more parents would become willing to discuss child rearing concerns and the problems of being a parent today.

Behavioral Objectives

There are five behavioral objectives projected for this practicum:

Objective 1: The parents will report that they have a better understanding of child development issues as verified by at least 100 out of the 328 identified parents of at-risk children and measured by the six item questionnaire designed by the writer. (See Appendix A.)

Objective 2: The parents will by the eighth month of the implementation period increase their positive input in their children's

academic lives as verified by at least 75 parents of at-risk children and measured by the questionnaire designed by the writer. (See Appendix B.)

Objective 3: The parents will have an opportunity to discuss concerns and issues with one another as verified by at least 75 parents of at-risk children and measured on an appraisal form designed by the writer. (See Appendix B.)

Objective 4: The parents of at-risk children will increase their participation in their children's school related activities and parent/teacher conferences from 37 at the end of the first quarter to at least 75 by the end of the third quarter as verified by teachers and measured by conference attendance reports. (See Appendix C.)

Objective 5: The parents of at-risk children will report that they discuss school related issues with their children at least three times weekly as verified by at least 100 parents and measured by the questionnaire designed by the writer. (See Appendix A.)

Measurement of Objectives

Objective 1 was measured by items four and five on the parent questionnaire. It was required that at least 100 out of the 328 parents of at-risk children report that they had a better understanding of child development issues as verified by the writer. (See Appendix A.)

Objective 2 was measured by items one, three, and six on the questionnaire for parents concerning their view of their input into their children's academic lives. It was required that at least 100 of the 328 parents of at-risk children report that there has been an increase in the positive input that they have in their children's academic life. (See Appendix B.)

Objective 3 was measured by a self-report questionnaire and verified by the writer. It was required that 75 parents of at-risk children report that they had had an opportunity to discuss and share parenting issues with other parents. (See Appendix B).

Objective 4 was measured by the comparison of teachers' first and third quarter conference attendance reports, and verified by the teachers. It was required that participation of parents of at-risk children increase from 37 to 75 at the parent/teacher conferences and other school-related activities. The attendance report was logged by the teachers on a form designed by the writer. (See Appendix C.)

Objective 5 was measured by at least 100 of the 328 parents of at-risk children's self-report on item six of the parent questionnaire and verified by the writer. It was required that they report that they discuss school-related issues with their children at least three times a week. (See Appendix A.)

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

The purpose of working with at-risk parents in this practicum was to encourage these parents to be a positive influence in the academic lives of their children. Therefore, the results were not based solely on parents' written responses. In the event that some parents would hesitate to provide written responses, by returning the questionnaire, telephone conferences were used. A record was kept by the writer of the telephone questionnaire responses made. (See Appendix D.)

It was necessary to maintain a record of the material shared with parents. This record served two purposes. It ensured continuity of subjects and it was also important in the planning and modification of future projects. (See Appendix E.)

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

In order to determine whether or not the objectives of the practicum were accomplished, charts and tables were used to analyze the results. The figures and tables present data indicative of mastery level on the designated assessment instruments utilized for each objective.

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solution

Parents of at-risk children do not participate in school-related activities, and thus are not able to help and support their children. Research literature is constantly seeking ways to enhance parental involvement in schools. In order for our country to remain strong in the 1990s, "we must confront our knowledge and use it to guide our efforts; then we must operate our schools in different ways, using our knowledge" (Glickman, 1984, p. 5).

The literature guides our efforts and within this knowledge base a solution is sought. Programs to encourage and reduce the frustration of parents of at-risk children are enhanced by a review of the literature.

Group counseling for abusive parents was the focus of Otto (1991) in a study structured to maximize peer support and to reduce the feeling of social isolation felt by parents. The idea was to provide a forum whereby parents can make changes in their thinking and behaving. Otto (1991) felt that abusive parents often may not like their behavior but may feel that their violent behavior is "not bad enough" to warrant professional intervention. The study expected that once abusive parents met other adults who have similar problems that they would be able to discuss their problems and relate to each other without fear. In general it was found that the relationships formed between the different parents provided help for each other during the many crises that occurred within families during the duration of the group counseling experience.

A mother's interaction with other adults outside the family appeared to be related to the effectiveness in which that mother related to, and parented

her child (Szykula, Mas, Turner, Crowley & Sayger, 1991). They noted that mothers who consider their children as having acting out problems and who themselves had "low rates of supportive social contacts were observed to experience significantly less frequent pro-social mother-child interaction" than do mothers who had some higher levels of social support (p. 89). The authors felt that programs were needed to help both the child and mother. Mothers should also be included so that their needs for interaction and positive social support from other adults may be addressed.

Schaefer (1991) reviewed research that supported the correlation of parent's behavior with the child's achievement in school. Research also supported a model of parent education that was designed to inform parents, by increasing their knowledge and encouraging their participation in the school life of their children. According to Schaefer (1991), more needs to be understood about characteristics of parents that contribute to the child's developing in a competent manner. Due to this lack of understanding, there has been the relative neglect of the essential goal of helping parents learn how to help their children. Schaefer (1991) advocated that parents strive for their children to develop self-directing qualities rather than a sense of conforming to values. He also advocateed parents using democratic child rearing methods versus authoritarian child rearing strategies.

Greenwood and Hickman (1991) focused on teacher education in the practice of parent involvement. Although there are many implications in parent involvement, there has been little pre-service or in-service preparation for teachers. They viewed the teacher's role, especially at the elementary school level as interacting with the parent in six different ways:

1. parent as audience,
2. parent as volunteer,

3. parent as paraprofessional,
4. parent as teacher of own child,
5. parent as learner, and
6. parent as decision maker.

They suggested that different approaches with parents yield different results for children, parents, and the school. The authors value the teacher's role in this process of parent education.

A study by Epstein and Dauber (1991) used data from 171 teachers in eight inner-city elementary and middle schools. This data examined the connection between school programs and parents. They were interested in how parent involvement in their child's different academic subjects differed when their child was in a self-contained, semi-departmentalized, or departmentalized classroom. The study emphasized not just having programs, but that the strength of the programs increases the parent connection. For example, it was noted (Epstein & Dauber, 1991) that when teachers make parental involvement part of their regular teaching practice that there are benefits to the children as well as to the teachers: (1) Parents increase their interaction with their children at home; (2) Parents feel more positive about their abilities in instructing their children at home; (3) Parents rate the teachers as better teachers overall; and (4) Children improve in the academic and social skills.

Comer and Haynes (1991) embraced the notion that parental involvement in their children's education is essential to "effective schooling" (p. 261). They felt that parental involvement strengthened academic and social programs. Emphasis was placed on the fact that this involvement focused on ways to create a positive atmosphere with relationships dealing with parental involvement.

Their ecological approach advocated involving parents in all levels of school life. Comer and Haynes (1991) listed several levels of parent/school involvement:

1. the general support of the school's educational programs,
2. active participation in daily activities, and
3. school planning and management.

They suggested parental input in establishing academic and social goals and in developing and implementing school programs. The authors emphasized the role of the parent as providing perspectives on issues and topics, and not the idea of challenging the authority of principals and their staff.

Cochran and Dean (1991) viewed human development encompassing a role that is necessarily played by local communities. They viewed schools as key institutions in the local communities, and thus felt that schools were in a focal position to either enhance or retard an empowerment process between parents and community. They cautioned that schools should reach beyond token involvement of interaction with parents to an interaction with teachers and administrators in the process of improving school achievement.

Olmsted (1991) viewed parent involvement programs as important in children's education. The Follow Through educational model was described as one proven model of parent involvement. It reported on qualitative and quantitative information from the first 20 years of Follow Through. Data indicated that parent involvement could have benefits for children, parents, and the school system in general. There were three areas found to have positive outcomes from parent involvement. They are advocacy, decision making, and instruction. As educators plan for the future, they felt that a review of programs including parental involvement is in order.

Education of the Handicapped Amendments is comprised of a bill labeled PL99-457. The law went into effect in 1991. The bill provides a federal mandate and financial backing for comprehensive services to families of children with certain disabilities. Brantlinger (1991) felt that educators must be aware of ways to help qualifying children and their families receive needed services. Brantlinger (1991) discussed research findings on the influences that children with special needs have on their families and the special impact that these families have on their children.

The bill encompasses children with severe disabilities as well as children with mild learning disabilities. To this effect, potential problems of correctly responding to the law are discussed. Brantlinger (1991) suggested that support systems be comprehensive, flexible, and voluntary in nature. It was felt that it is important to convey specifically to parents the expected outcomes, and that school personnel be prepared for programming to include parents.

Based upon research on parent involvement and experiences from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), Wikelund (1990) has developed a guide for schools to use in effectively involving parents in their children's education. The guide discussed types of parent involvement from the two basic involvements of getting their children to school on time, and looking at the papers the child brings home; to being an advocate in the community for needed school programs.

The experiences noted through the research are a result of a parent involvement demonstration project in two elementary schools in a predominantly Black school and a rural school with a 25% Hispanic student population. The common barriers to effective parent involvement include:

1. Parent involvement is not well understood, highly valued, or well implemented.
2. Schools of education to not provide teacher training.
3. Parent involvement at the in-service level is not a high priority.
4. Teachers may not have the time or energy to become involved.
5. Teachers' unions may indirectly discourage such involvement.

The promotion of positive teacher/parent relationships is considered by Kuykendall (1989) as a positive way for students to overcome fear of failure and the rejection of success. Kuykendall (1989) cites eight ways that teachers and parents can work together for the benefit of the child:

1. Teachers may begin by calling parents to discuss the child's progress.
2. Discuss the good things noticed by the teacher.
3. Parents attend parent-teacher conferences.
4. Teachers should send positive notes home during the year.
5. Parents should learn more about community resources, leaders, and after-school activities for your school.
6. Teachers give children home assignments that involve other family members.
7. Teachers and parents show the utmost of respect and concern for one another.
8. Parents should be visible at school functions.

An innovative program was investigated by Binford and Newell (1991). The program was considered by the late Ira J. Gordon as a "hand-up" rather than a "hand-out" (p. 233). This program, the home-involvement model, used a parent educator from the community to make home visits. The purpose of this parent educator was to initiate a home-school learning cycle. The successful

program has suffered budget cuts. National assessment data attest to the positive contributions of this approach to parent education.

Snodgrass (1991) addressed the role of parents as positive members of their child's educational years. The investigation covered areas from primary through the secondary school levels. In Snodgrass' view, parental ideals affect their offspring's school experiences. When parents do not teach values, diligence, and responsibility, children are less likely to develop similar attitudes and have more discipline problems.

When the children enter school, some parents feel that they are transferring responsibility to the schools. Some transfer too much. As children progress through the school system, teachers witness a decline in parental involvement. Coordinated support between parents and schools, according to Snodgrass (1991) has been proven to be significant in the achievement levels of adolescents . . . and without this coordination, many adolescents develop physical and intellectual patterns that are harmful.

Pharis and Levin (1991) selected thirty mothers for a one-to-four year participation in an intervention project. The selected mothers were provided with services and were chosen because they were among the most difficult-to-serve population. These mothers were at risk for maladoptive parenting behaviors. After the required participation, the mothers reported that they valued the relationship aspect of the services that they received more highly than they did the concrete services. These concrete services included transportation, housing, and money management.

Fulton, Murphy, and Anderson (1991) studied adolescent mothers. These mothers participated in an intervention program in which they had major input in determining the knowledge they needed concerning their children's growth and their own parenting skills. The program lasted four months and

had 76 participants. A pre-post test design was used to measure changes in self-esteem, knowledge of child development, and tendencies toward inappropriate interactions with children. Results showed significant gains after the program in child development and child abuse potential. However, no significant differences were found in the measures of self-esteem. A ten-month follow-up study found no child abuse or neglect among these mothers.

The fact that there was no measurable difference in self-esteem may be explained by the fact that the mothers may have been so engulfed in identity resolution that a longer period of time was needed to detect gains in self-esteem. However, gains in self-esteem were seen as necessary in determining when direct intervention is needed to safeguard the well being of the mother's child.

Gelfer (1991) felt that parent-teacher communication can provide useful information for parents in their desire to help their children at school or at home. He presented various ideas and techniques teachers could use to enhance such communication. Suggested ideas included parent-teacher portfolios of written communication, telephone conferences, printed communication in the form of newsletters, notes, anecdotal records, performance evaluations, and parent-teacher conferences. Home visits are optional and are usually centered around the child's individual needs and interest. The visits should be brief and informal with a positive follow-up visit at a later date.

The article by Rowe (1990) refuted the myth that family environments influenced the development of their offspring. The article focuses on traits such as intelligence quotient, activity level, shyness, and dominance. The question was raised, "But do parents really deserve so much blame for children

who turn out poorly or so much credit for children who turn out well?" (p. 606).

Rowe (1990) indicated that some environmental influences are shared by parent and child, but that the role of possible non-shared environmental influences may be prominent in producing the targeted child's behavior. In this way Rowe (1990) felt that parents will be less likely to blame themselves for their child's problems and may then form a natural alliance for help concerning the child.

As the research would imply, although the problem facing American families today is difficult, especially for families of children at-risk, there are definite possibilities for positive change. Many possibilities for easing the American dilemma are offered in the research. It is within the domain of research to investigate. It is the responsibility of practitioners, such as the writer, to assimilate the knowledge accumulated and move towards, by whatever professional means necessary, practical solutions. Specifically, it is to create viable practices and programs through which the knowledge base can become viable and useful. In this way dysfunctional families may be channeled into becoming vibrant and positive connections in the lives of their children.

The purpose of this practicum, using the research knowledge as a base, is to enlighten parents to their own self-worth, to inform them of their children's developmental needs, and encourage them to support their children. The writer is mindful of the research-supported premise that parents are able to, and should be involved in programs established for their benefit.

Description and Justification for Solutions Selected

There are three significant points to be made in addressing the selected solution to the problem raised. These significant points were gleaned from the literature review.

The first point is made by Rowe (1990). That is to say, parents will become more involved in their children's school life if they do not perceive themselves as part of the problem. As Rowe (1990) explains, the environmental influences that affect the child are shared by the parent. Who is to blame? Perhaps the burden of blame rests really on the society at large. At any rate the question of blame is too complex to belabor. Therefore, it is more valuable to be solution orientated.

In order to further clarify the point made by Rowe (1990), it is significant to elaborate on the study by Pharis and Levin (1991) mentioned in the review of the literature in the first part of this chapter. In the research the mothers studied valued the personal interaction of another helping them and supporting them more than they did the concrete services provided. The provision of transportation to the school and baby sitting services were appreciated. However, in accordance with Maslow's need hierarchy (1954), the mothers were motivated by their social and emotional concerns.

The third point is emphasized by Fulton, Murphy, and Anderson (1991) when they studied adolescent mothers. The mothers had a major part in determining the knowledge they needed concerning the growth of their children. This would imply that the school should ascertain through parental input what they would like to know in regard to their children's development during these school years.

Bronfenbrenner suggested that humans have the power of self-healing (1979). With increased information, parents could develop cognitive

intercessions, a mode of thinking that would intercede a characteristic or usual way of processing information. These cognitive intercessions were vital to their own personal social relationships and reflected in their children's social relationships as well.

Therefore, the writer seeks two familiar techniques for reduced frustration and increased participation in parents. The first was to write a newsletter. The second was to conduct eight monthly parent groups. Although these techniques to foster change in parents are familiar, this practicum's approach was to quickly get parents' attention by saying "You are not to blame for your children's problems . . ." and then by saying "In order for you to help your child, what information would you find helpful?"

It was hoped that these two avenues would vicariously (newsletter) and informally (group) support the parents and help them solve some of the problems that they encountered.

The monthly newsletter provided information to parents and also provided them with the opportunity to choose topics that were of interest to them. The newsletter was called Roundtable for Parents. There were at least five articles in each Roundtable for Parents, including a "From Me to You" column where parents, after the first edition, were encouraged to share helpful hints or items of interest. The writer kept a log of the topics covered. This log insured a balance in the coverage of topics and avoided omissions or duplications. (See Appendix F.) The log was also helpful in keeping deadlines. After the first edition, parents sent in requests for topics to be discussed in articles for the following edition. This procedure continued for the subsequent Round Table editions. The total number of editions were eight, seven of which contained parent request for topics that were included in the following edition. The circulation of the last three editions of Roundtable for

Parents was through subscriptions. This circulation through subscriptions helped determine the impact of the practicum, and was also utilized in the measurement of two of the objectives.

Of great concern and crucial to the success of the eight-month intervention was the attendance at the eight parent sessions. Across the street from the work setting is a settlement house. It is well known to the community. It offers services from day care for preschoolers, to activities for senior citizens. The settlement house is not only familiar to the residents of the area, but it also has a safe and relaxed atmosphere. Therefore, it was hoped that permission would be given for the parents to come to the settlement house for the parent group sessions.

The writer planned to attend the next monthly community meeting and explain the purpose of the parent groups and newsletters. There is a strong community network within this group and, through the community network's efforts, parents with a child attending the school in the work setting and not attending the meeting would certainly be contacted.

The main purpose of the parent groups, as was explained to the president of the community group, was for parents to explore different ways to help and support their children's efforts in school. Another purpose of the groups, as with the newsletter, was to encourage parents to help themselves and stimulate their thoughts for possibilities of self-help.

Report of Action Taken

The necessary preparations were completed for this practicum. Approval for the implementation strategy was given by the principal and president of the community organization. Parent volunteers prepared to copy and distribute, at the appropriate times, the newsletters to the classrooms for

the children to take home to their parents. Beginning at the sixth month of implementation, the district agreed to mail the last three newsletters to parent subscribers. The director of the settlement house approved the parent group's meeting at the settlement house for the eight-month period. Upon approval of this practicum, preparation for the first edition of the newsletter began and the first parent group was formed.

There was an eight-month projected time line for the newsletter and the parent groups. At the beginning of the first month, the writer attended the scheduled community meeting at the settlement house. The purpose was to tell the parents and the community of the coming newsletter and parent groups. Interested parents joined one of the eight groups that met weekly for the period of one month. Part of the first group was formed from parents attending the community meeting. Additional group members for this first group were added through personal contact.

At the beginning of the first month, the topics for the news articles were selected by the writer and the second parent group was advertised. Articles were written during the second and third week. A column, "From Me to You," explained the purpose of the newsletter and asked for topics of interest so that the writer could address those topics in the next edition. A tear-off sheet was provided in the newsletter for parents to send in topics of interest and to sign up for the second parent group. This tear-off sheet was returned to the writer by the children. During the fourth week, the newsletter was copied by parent volunteers and distributed to the classrooms. The first parent group ended, and the parents filled out the first set of appraisal forms.

At the beginning of the second month, the second parent group began, and the topics for the second newsletter, Roundtable for Parents, were

researched. The helpful hints section of the newsletter was compiled during the third week. At the beginning of the fourth week, the newsletter was proofed and copied for distribution. Some of the topics in the newsletter were discussed in the parent groups. The newsletter, Roundtable for Parents, was distributed at the end of the month, and the parent group will appraise their group experience.

During the third month, the procedure was similar to that of the second month. The parents in the parent group suggested a topic to be discussed in the third newsletter. The newsletter emphasized the interpersonal and sharing aspects of the parent groups. It was hoped that this would help to continue interest in the parent groups. At the end of the month, the newsletter was distributed and the parent group members appraised their experiences in the group.

The fourth month marked the mid-point of the practicum. The parent group then advertised through posters displayed in the school. There were also posters placed in the settlement house advertising the newsletter and parent groups. The procedure for the newsletter was the same. During this month, the writer compared the topics already covered in the newsletter with the suggested topics. This was to insure that the parents received a well rounded supply and that important issues were not forgotten.

During the fifth month, the fifth parent group began and the newsletter was distributed. This was the month of advertising for subscriptions to the newsletter. The subscriptions were provided for the sixth, seventh, and eighth issues of Roundtable for Parents. In order to receive the last three issues, parents subscribed to the newsletter by sending in the tear-off portion provided in the newsletter.

During the sixth month, the two activities in place continued and the list of addresses of those subscribing to the last three issues of the newsletter were completed. At the end of the month, the newsletter was mailed to the subscribers and the members of the parent group appraised the group.

During the seventh month, the newsletter proceeded as per the subscription plan and the seventh parent group was conducted. The parent group appraisal was completed by the parents.

The eighth month marked the end of the practicum. The final newsletter was distributed and the last parent group for the practicum was formed. The newsletter included articles that summarize the information disseminated over the last seven months. It also included the final "Helpful Hints" section submitted by parents and the parent questionnaire.

The parent groups proceeded as in previous months. Since this group had a summary of the seven-months of newsletters, the last session of the eighth parent group was used to obtain feedback about the impact of the newsletters, as well as to complete the appraisal forms for the group's experience.

The group discussion provided feedback on the helpfulness of the topics that the parents requested for the newsletter. The topics related both to parenting and to self-help. There were several issues that the parents found helpful that were discussed in the newsletters and groups. Among the topics deemed helpful were:

1. Why do teachers pick on my kids?
2. Spanking doesn't seem to help.
3. Why does my child never have homework?
4. Why is the teacher so hard on my child?
5. I can't do anything with my child.

6. How can my child go to college?

7. When do kids learn?

Although many parents in the school population were volunteers, and suggested topics for the newsletter, the parent groups tended to have a membership of unwed mothers. Throughout the groups, the writer tended to focus some part of the discussion time on the newsletter topic, When do kids learn? At least three of the groups progressed from the usual stilted discourse to in depth soul searching. In other words the notion that children are learning "all of the time" was no longer resisted. The realization that children learned not only in school, but that they also learned from their own mother's modeled behavior, was verbalized by some of the groups' members. The discussions then focused on the "mystery" that children appear to automatically process negative behaviors, but have to be consistently taught positive ones.

The mothers related to self-help issues that centered around information on vocational training, and they often elaborated on the connection between their personal self expectation for success in life with the feelings that they project to their children. In one mother's words, "If you don't think you can do it, how can you tell them they can?"

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DISSEMINATION

Results

The problem that existed in the work setting was that many parents of the children at risk for failure did not participate in school-related activities, and thus were not able to support their children. Some parents were disillusioned with their children's success in school, and negatively viewed all school contacts. Others, reflective of Bronfenbrenner (1979), viewed attainable success in the society of the community more valuable than expected failure in school. School was viewed as a necessary evil because memories of personal unpleasant school experiences were vivid in the minds of these parents. The opportunity for positive interactions were not perceived as such, but as a waste of time, a source of embarrassment, a time to "look" inferior, and to bring back bad memories.

One solution to this problem was to provide a forum, through group participation, that offered parents an opportunity to identify and discuss issues that were of interest to them. This was accomplished through the parent groups. Other solutions were to provide instruction, to address areas of interest, and to give parents ownership by seeing their ideas in print. This was done through the newsletter, Round Table for Parents.

The goals of this practicum were to engage parents of children at-risk for failure in informative and self-help experiences that would enable the families to feel more connected with the school experience. These goals needed to be reflected in increased visible interaction with the school.

Specific objectives were designed to achieve these goals. The following is a list of each objective, followed by the results, related to that specific objective:

Objective 1: The parents will report that they have a better understanding of child development issues as verified by at least 100 out of the 328 identified parents of at-risk children, and measured by the six-item questionnaire designed by the writer. (See Appendix A.)

The six-item questionnaire was included in the eighth and final newsletter. It was sent to all subscribing parents. There were 244 parents of the 328 parents of at-risk children subscribing to the newsletter. When this final newsletter was mailed, a small dot was placed in the lower left-hand corner of the 244 questionnaires that were sent to the parents of at-risk children. Since the questionnaires were returned anonymously, the small dot in the corner was the method used to identify those questionnaires needed to verify the objective.

The objective required 100 responses with a small dot in the left-hand corner. There were 157 such responses. Eighty-seven families of at-risk children did not respond to the questionnaire. Table 1 summarizes the results for this objective.

Table 1

Parents of At-Risk Children Responding to the Questionnaire

Total Number of At-Risk Parent Subscribers - 244

Responding	Not Responding	Needed for Mastery
157	87	100

The other requirement for the accomplishment of the objective related to responses in the affirmative to the first five statements of the questionnaire. The responses reflected some of the knowledge gained by the parents returning the questionnaire. The topics included in the questionnaire were discussed in at least two issues of the newsletter and also discussed in the groups.

Table 2 provides an item analysis of the results of the 157 parents returning the questionnaire. Thirty-eight of the 157 responses were completed by telephone. It should be kept in mind that 100 affirmative responses from the first five statements on the questionnaire are required for mastery for Objective 1.

Table 2

Item Analysis of Responses to the Parent Appraisal Form

Total Number of Questionnaires - 157

Statement	Yes	No
1	157	--
2	141	16
3	147	10
4	157	--
5	157	--
*6	117	40

*Statement six relates to Objective 5.

Objective 2: The parents will by the eighth month of the implementation period increase their positive input in their children's

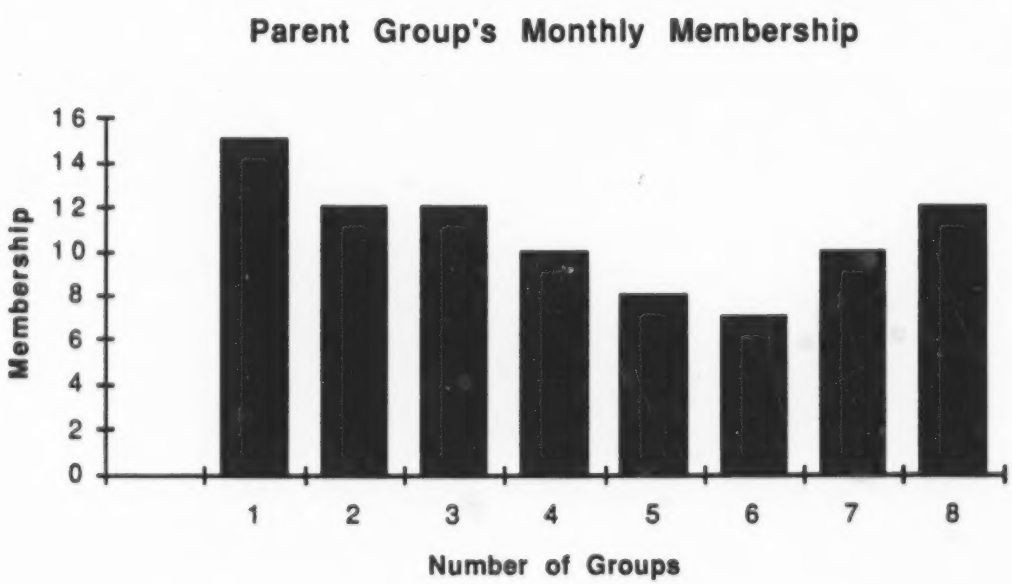
academic lives as verified by at least 75 parents of at-risk children and measured by an appraisal form designed by the writer. (See Appendix B.)

The requirement for the accomplishment of Objective 2 was in two parts. First, the verification of the number of parents attending the workshops was needed.

There were eight parent groups during the implementation period. The objective required that a total of 75 parents of at-risk children attend the parent group sessions. A total of 86 parents of at-risk children attended. The monthly group sessions had a range of from 7 to 15 members.

Figure 1 summarizes the membership of each group and verifies that at least 75 parents of at-risk children attended parent groups.

Figure 1



Total Membership = 86

The second requirement needed for mastery of the objective was for 75 parents of at-risk children to verify, as reflected in positive responses to Statement 5 on the parent group questionnaire, that they have increased their positive input in the academic lives of their children.

All of the members returned positive feedback via the parent group appraisal form. Attendance in general was good. However, in order to obtain responses from parents who were not in attendance at their last session, home visits were made. This was agreed upon at the first session and the parents were supportive. Table 3 (Statement 5, pg. 37) summarizes the positive responses to the parent interaction with their child as verified by the parent group appraisal form.

Table 3

Responses of the Parents of At-Risk Children

to the Parent Group Appraisal Form

Total Number of Parents of At-Risk Children - 86

Statement	Positive Responses	Percentage
1	86	100%
2	86	100%
3	86	100%
4	86	100%
*5	86	100%

*Statement 5 relates to Objective 2.

Objective 3: The parents will have an opportunity to discuss concerns and issues with one another as verified by at least 75 parents of at-risk

children and measured on an appraisal form designed by the writer. (See Appendix B.)

This objective was not intended to measure membership or positive gain in the academic lives of the children, that was the intent of Objective 2. The intent of this objective was to determine if parents felt that they had had the opportunity to voice their opinions, listen to others, and obtain and give positive feedback. This objective was for the parents.

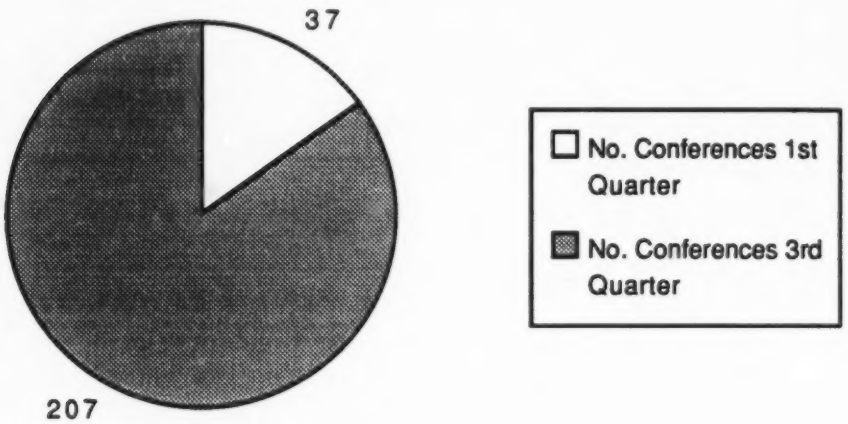
The four statements on the parent questionnaire measure this objective. The total membership of 86 parents responded favorably to these statements. Table 3 (Statements 1-4, pg. 37) summarizes the results for the objective.

Objective 4: The parents of at-risk children will increase their participation in their children's school-related activities and parent/teacher conferences from 37 at the end of the first quarter to at least 75 by the end of the third quarter as verified by teachers and measured by conference attendance reports. (See Appendix C.)

This objective was accomplished at the end of the third quarter of the school year. Teachers verified that 207 parent conferences of at-risk children were held. This is a significant gain. There were over five times as many parent conferences held during the third quarter than were held during the first quarter. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the results.

Figure 2

Parents of At-Risk Children's Conferences with Teachers



5.6 times as many conferences in third quarter

Objective 5: The parents of at-risk children will report that they discuss school-related issues with their children at least three times weekly as verified by at least 100 parents and measured by the questionnaire. (See Appendix A.)

Item six of the parent questionnaire related to this objective. One hundred fifty-seven parents of at-risk children subscribers returned the questionnaire. One hundred seventeen parents verified that they discuss school-related issued with their children at least three times a week. A total of 100 parents was required to accomplish this objective. Table 2, page 35, summarizes the results of this objective.

It should be noted in this report that a total of 865 parents subscribed to the newsletter. A total of 749 parents returned their questionnaires with

favorable responses. The parents of at-risk children returning the questionnaire were 157. It should also be noted that 35 families of at-risk children had more than one child attending the school. Each family, general population or at-risk population, was counted once.

Discussion

A review and interpretation of the data indicates that the five objectives were met. The goals of this practicum were to engage parents of children at risk for failure in informative and self-help experiences that would enable these families to feel more connected with the school experience. The results also confirm that parents are more involved and less frustrated. Likewise, teachers and administrators are less frustrated, and the children see a partnership developing between their parents and teachers.

A review of the literature reflects the basic premise of this practicum. There are several factors that affect the parenting role. Let it be clear that one is not that parents do not care about the welfare of their children. There is no formal training to prepare parents for the role of parenthood (Pasley & Gecas, 1984). The difficulty in the role is augmented by the fact that there is a lack of clarity and role definition in parenting, and that the role must change as the offspring moves through the different developmental stages (Piaget, 1983).

It is likely that most of the at-risk families in the work setting are products of at-risk families themselves. Therefore, their "training grounds" were more likely to add to the perpetuation of the negative values than to reduce it. Likewise, the frustration that they transmit to the third generation of children that attend school in the work setting would tend to continue the cycle.

Now some parents have developed a foundation for a positive social outlet and a sense of pride and fulfillment that leads to a sense of competency (Bandura, 1976). This is reflected in self report and through behavior. Not only did 117 at-risk families attend the third quarter's parent/teacher conferences, as was discussed in the results of Objective 4, they were also more visible at the school year's open house. Open house for the school year was scheduled just at the close of this practicum. The at-risk children were well represented. Some parents commented at the open house about the parent groups, "We have our own support group now. When does the next group start?" Another indicator of positive behavior was the fact that two parents, although they had moved away from the neighborhood, returned their questionnaires.

These behaviors show a decrease in these parents' needs for coping by avoiding (Greene & Grimsley, 1991). In addition, these parents now perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, as being a part of their children's schooling. According to Ergon-Rowe (1990), this feeling will increase parental partnership with their children's schooling.

Many of the mothers of at-risk children in the work setting have gained information. One specific area of information that inspired the mothers was the fact that verbal guidance has a greater impact on children's intellectual development than does socioeconomic factors or educational studies (Portes, 1991; Iverson & Walberg, 1979). This knowledge added to their feelings of competency and added vigor to the group discussions.

Leadership and sense of manners and decorum began to develop. Sometimes the mothers would suggest topics for the newsletter, join the following group, and mention with the pride of ownership that a certain article was "their article." It is then reinforced by the writer that the same

feeling of ownership can be felt by their children in school. The connection was made! These mothers were learning the skill of substituting positive thoughts for negative ones, and according to Dilley (1983), this is necessary for positive change.

The integration of the many offering from the literature review confirmed the writer's expectation that barriers that inhibit parents of at-risk children could be reduced and that these parents feeling less frustrated could form partnerships with the school. Specifically, these parents can become viable positive influences in reducing the frustration in their own children.

The most important implication derived from this practicum is the realization that a partnership does not place blame. It is the sensitivity to the notion that neither the home or school is to blame for the problems in American schools today. For the parents were sensitive to the notion that either they perceived themselves, or that they were perceived by others, as being a part of their children's problems in school. Ergon & Rowe (1990) point out that if either of these feelings are perceived by parents, they will be less likely to participate. This is a constant struggle and needs on-going care in preserving the partnership.

An unanticipated positive outcome of the practicum relates to the other part of the partnership, the school. In order to help parents, the helping professionals, i.e. teachers, nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and administrators must be informed. One's understanding of the principles and key elements of family-centered care is essential in a partnership, for these professionals to both understand and use. Professionals must recognize the strengths of the particular family and build on these strengths (Johnson, 1990). It was, therefore, rewarding to see the interest the newsletters generated in the professionals in the work setting. After all, most of the

research reflected in the newsletters was current, and most professionals in the work setting found the newsletter informative and with knowledge comes change in attitudes and behaviors.

Recommendation

1. It is recommended that the newsletters continue. It is also recommended that it be a shared project with another member of the school staff.
2. It is recommended that the parent groups, renamed Parent Support Groups, continue.
3. It is recommended that other schools find ways to disseminate and relate the current findings and implication in the literature to their parents and staff.
4. It is recommended that the academic achievement and social growth of the children's whose parents were part of the parent groups be monitored.

Dissemination

All forms of verbal communication could converge into one setting. That setting is cable television. Cable television is very popular among the parents whose children are in the greatest risk area. The parents, even the children, identify with the different personalities appearing on the air. Many of the personalities discussing community topics are known to these families. Many religious programs are familiar and some parents even appear on some of the cable televised programs. The most popular viewing day in this particular viewing area is all day Sunday or on Monday evenings. Through the security, comfort, and convenience of their own homes, parents can

realize their potential as parents, gain information, bond with the supporting professionals, appear on the show . . . the list of positives goes on and on.

The writer plans for a cable television show. The frequency of the show depends on funding.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. All of our children want to be successful in school.

   Yes ____ No ____

2. As children develop through the school years, they need to know that the school and home both want the same things for them.

   Yes ____ No ____

3. Children always need to know that they can be successful in school.

   Yes ____ No ____

4. Children explore ways of getting around doing what they know is the right thing for them to do. Often they are testing their limits.

   Yes ____ No ____

5. In testing their limits, children want to know how far we will let them go before stopping them. If we do not stop them, they become confused, hurt, and angry . . . but they will not stop unless we help them to stop.

   Yes ____ No ____

6. I discuss school-related issues with my child/children at least three times a week.

   Yes ____ No ____

APPENDIX B

PARENT GROUP APPRAISAL FORM

PARENT GROUP APPRAISAL FORM

1. The purpose of the group was clear to me.

   Yes ____ No ____

2. Whether or not I always expressed myself, I felt comfortable in the group.

   Yes ____ No ____

3. The topics were of interest to me.

   Yes ____ No ____

4. The group was a positive experience for me.

   Yes ____ No ____

5. I am more involved with my child in his/her school day.

   Yes ____ No ____

APPENDIX C

TEACHER CONFERENCE SUMMARY

TEACHER/CONFERENCE SUMMARY	
Parent/Teacher Conference	Teacher _____
	Room _____
1st Marking Period Attendance	3rd Marking Period Attendance
# Requested _____	# Requested _____
# Attended _____	# Attended _____
# Phone Conferences _____	# Phone Conferences _____

APPENDIX D

PARENT PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

TELEPHONE RESPONES

PARENT PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

TELEPHONE RESPONSES

Directions: Read questionnaire to parents. Record their responses.

Parent's Name/Child	Phone No.	Room	Responses	
			Yes	No

APPENDIX E

WRITER'S RECORD OF TOPICS

	WRITER'S RECORD OF TOPICS DISCUSSED			
	Topic Suggested	Research Date	Issue Date	Hold Until (Date)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				

APPENDIX F

ROUNDTABLE FOR PARENT'S LOG

	ROUNDTABLE FOR PARENTS LOG			
	Month	Date Articles Completed	Date Copied	Distributed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				